

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

October 4, 1999

Professor Lawrence C. Davis, Chair  
Graduate Biochemistry Group  
Department of Biochemistry  
Kansas State University  
104 Willard Hall  
Manhattan, Kansas 66506-3702

Dear Professor Davis:

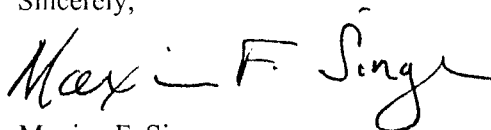
Thank you very much for the interesting letter. I found myself agreeing with a great deal of what you wrote. In an op-ed piece I prepared for the *Washington Post*, I did indeed recognize that the public education system in Kansas was a very good one. The fact that it is better than that of many other states, and certainly much better than the near disaster we have here in Washington, made the decision of the Kansas State Board of Education even more regrettable. I hope you saw the op-ed piece which I know has been circulated in Kansas.

While I agree with a good deal of what you said in your letter, I do think it important for there to be outspoken public comment on the Board's decision. There are not many ways for the scientific community to make itself heard on the issue of the teaching of evolution. There are ways for the scientific community to express itself, but often these are not 'heard'. Whether we like it or not, public occurrences such as what happened in Kansas, make opportunities for press coverage that can reflect the scientific view. Similarly, Gary Conrad's letter soliciting suggestions for candidates, provided a timely opportunity to make a point, even recognizing that complex situations are not fully addressed by single, simplistic responses. Moreover, public criticism of what happened in Kansas at least alerts people in other states that the scientific community is watching and will try to ameliorate challenges to the teaching of sound science.

The high school text you mentioned using yourself in Pennsylvania, "Modern Biology", was, I think, the book known for having been "cleansed" of evolution. It is likely that I too used that book in my huge public high school in Brooklyn, though I don't exactly remember. And I went from Brooklyn to Swarthmore, as your wife did from Iowa. Not only that, but one of my daughters is a professor in the Math Department at Haverford! Coincidence is a wonderful thing.

With cordial regards,

Sincerely,



Maxine F. Singer

MFS/sb

1530 P STREET, NORTHWEST • WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-1910 • 202-387-6400 • FAX 202-387-8092

Department of Plant Biology  
Stanford, California

Department of Embryology  
Baltimore, Maryland

Department of Terrestrial Magnetism  
Washington, D.C.

Geophysical Laboratory  
Washington, D.C.

\* The Observatories  
Pasadena, California, and Las Campanas, Chile